

ive to ten percent of the state's population between 1860 and the end of the nineteenth century. In California, Mexicans and Mexican Americans also constituted less than ten percent of the population by the century's close.

## 7 / The Mexican War

Fifteen years before the United States plunged into civil war, fought a war against Mexico that added half a million square miles of territory to the United States. It was the first war the nation fought almost entirely outside its borders. The underlying cause of the war was the inexorable movement of pioneers into the Far West. As citizens of the United States marched westward, they moved into land claimed by Mexico and inevitably their interests clashed with Mexican claims.

The immediate reason for the conflict was the annexation of Texas in 1845. Despite its defeat at San Jacinto in 1836, Mexico refused to recognize Texas independence and warned the United States that annexation would be tantamount to a declaration of war. When Congress voted to annex Texas, Mexico cut diplomatic relations, but took no further action.

President James Polk told his commanders to prepare for war. He ordered naval vessels in the Gulf of Mexico to position themselves outside Mexican ports. Secretly he warned the Pacific fleet to prepare to seize ports along the California coast. Anticipating a possible Mexican invasion of Texas, he dispatched forces in Louisiana to Corpus Christi in south Texas.

Peaceful settlement of the two country's differences still seemed possible. In the fall of 1845, the President offered to pay 5 million if the Mexicans agreed to recognize the Rio Grande river as the southwestern boundary of Texas. Earlier, the Spanish government had defined the Texas boundary as the Nueces river, 130 miles to the north. No Americans lived between the Nueces and the Rio Grande, although many Mexicans lived in the region. Polk also offered \$5 million for the province of New Mexico—which included Nevada and Utah and parts of four other states—and \$25 million for California. Polk was eager to acquire California because he had been led to believe that

Britain was on the verge of making the region a protectorate. It was widely believed that Mexico had agreed to cede California to Britain as payment for outstanding debts.

The Mexican government, already incensed over the annexation of Texas, declined to negotiate. The Mexican president refused to receive an envoy from the United States and ordered his leading commander, General Mariano Paredes y Arrillaga, to assemble an army and reconquer Texas. Paredes toppled the government and declared himself president. But he too refused to deal with the envoy from the north.

Having failed to acquire New Mexico and California peacefully, Polk then ordered Brigadier General Zachary Taylor to march three thousand troops from Corpus Christi to "defend the Rio Grande." Late in March 1846, Taylor set up camp directly across from the Mexican city of Matamoros, on a stretch of land claimed by both Mexico and the United States.

On April 25, a Mexican cavalry force crossed the Rio Grande and clashed with a small Anglo squadron, forcing it to surrender after the loss of several lives. Polk used this episode as an excuse to declare war. Hours before he received word of the skirmish, Polk and his cabinet had already decided to press for war. "Mexico," the President told Congress, "has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil." Congress responded with a declaration of war. Polk's war message of May 11, 1846, follows.

### James K. Polk

The strong desire to establish peace with Mexico on liberal and honorable terms, and the readiness of this Government to regulate and adjust our boundary and other causes of difference with that power on such fair and equitable principles as would lead to permanent relations of the most friendly nature, induced me in September last to seek the reopening of diplomatic relations between the two countries. . . . An envoy of the United States repaired to Mexico with full powers to adjust every existing difference. But though present on the Mexican soil by agreement between the two Governments, invested with full powers, and bearing evidence of the most friendly dispositions, his mission has been unavailing. The Mexican Government not only refused to receive him or listen to his propositions, but after a long-

continued series of menaces have at last invaded our territory and shed the blood of our fellow-citizens on our own soil. . . .

In my message at the commencement of the present session I informed you that upon the earnest appeal both of the Congress and convention of Texas I had ordered an efficient military force to take a position "between the Nueces and the Del Norte." This has become necessary to meet a threatened invasion of Texas by the Mexican forces, for which extensive military preparations have been made. The invasion was threatened solely because Texas had determined, in accordance with a solemn resolution of the Congress of the United States, to annex herself to our Union, and under these circumstances it was plainly our duty to extend our protection over her citizens and soil. . . .

The Mexican forces at Matamoros [south of the Rio Grande River] assumed a belligerent attitude, and on the 12th of April [Mexican] General Ampudia, then in command, notified General [Zachary] Taylor to break up his camp within twenty-four hours and to retire beyond the Nueces River, and in the event of his failure to comply with these demands announced that arms, and arms alone, must decide the question. But no open act of hostility was committed until the 24th of April. On that day General Arista, who had succeeded to the command of the Mexican forces, communicated to General Taylor that "he considered hostilities commenced and should prosecute them." A party of dragoons of 63 men and officers were on the same day dispatched from the American camp . . . to ascertain whether the Mexican troops had crossed or were preparing to cross the river, "became engaged with a large body of these troops, and after a short affair, in which some 16 were killed and wounded, appear to have been surrounded and compelled to surrender."

The grievous wrongs perpetrated by Mexico upon our citizens throughout a long period of years remain unredressed, and solemn treaties pledging her public faith for this redress have been disregarded. A government either unable or unwilling to enforce the execution of such treaties fails to perform one of its plainest duties.

Our commerce with Mexico has been almost annihilated. It was formerly highly beneficial to both nations, but our merchants have been deterred from prosecuting it by the system of outrage and extortion which the Mexican authorities have pursued against them, whilst their appeals through their own Government for indemnity have been made in vain. Our forbearance has gone to such an extreme as to be mistaken in its character. Had we acted with vigor in repelling the insults and redressing the injuries inflicted by Mexico at the commencement, we

should doubtless have escaped all the difficulties in which we are now involved.

Instead of this, however, we have been exerting our best efforts to propitiate her good will. . . . But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon the American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.

As war exists, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country. . . .

In further vindication of our rights and defense of our territory, I invoke the prompt action of Congress to recognize the existence of the war, and to place at the disposition of the Executive the means of prosecuting the war with vigor, and thus hastening the restoration of peace.

SOURCE: James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897-1922), V: 2287-93.

## 8 / A Controversial War

In 1842, the commander of the Pacific squadron of the United States, mistakenly thinking that his country and Mexico had gone to war, invaded California and captured the region's capital at Monterey. He then returned it after discovering that there was no war.

The Mexican War was extremely controversial. Its supporters blamed Mexico for the hostilities because it had severed relations with the United States, threatened war, refused to receive an emissary, and refused to pay damage claims of United States citizens. Opponents denounced the war as an immoral land grab by an expansionist power against a weak neighbor that had been independent barely two decades. The war's critics claimed that Polk had deliberately provoked Mexico by ordering American troops into disputed territory. A senator declared that ordering Taylor to the Rio Grande was "as much an act of aggression on our part as is a man's pointing a

pistol at another's breast." Critics argued that the war was an expansionist power play dictated by an aggressive slaveocracy intent on acquiring more land for cotton cultivation and more slave states to better balance against the free states. Others blamed the war on expansion-minded westerners who were hungry for land and on eastern trading interests who dreamed of establishing a Pacific port in San Francisco to increase trade with Asia.

Although the story of war with Mexico tends to be overshadowed by the Civil War, the conflict had far-reaching consequences. It increased the nation's size by a third and created deep political divisions that threatened the nation's future.

In 1850 a group of Mexican writers offered their perspective on the meaning and significance of the Mexican War.

### Ramon Alcaraz et al.

To explain . . . the true origin of the war, it is sufficient to say that the insatiable ambition of the United States, favored by our weakness caused it. . . .

The North Americans . . . desired from the beginning to extend their dominion in such a manner as to become the absolute owners of almost all this continent. In two ways they could accomplish their ruling passion: in one by bringing under their laws and authority all America to the Isthmus of Panama; in another, in opening an overland passage to the Pacific Ocean, and making good harbors to facilitate its navigation. . . .

In the short space of some three quarters of a century events have verified the existence of these schemes and their rapid development. The North American Republic has already absorbed territories pertaining to Great Britain, France, Spain, and Mexico. It has employed every means to accomplish this—purchase as well as usurpation, skill as well as force, and nothing has restrained it when treating of territorial acquisition. Louisiana, the Floridas, Oregon, and Texas have successively fallen into its power. . . .

While the United States seemed to be animated by a sincere desire not to break the peace, their acts of hostility manifested very evidently what were their true intentions. Their ships infested our coasts; their troops continued advancing upon our territory, situated at places which under no aspect could be disputed. Thus violence and insult were united: thus at the very time they usurped part of our territory, they offered to us the

hand of treachery, to have soon the audacity to say that our obstinacy and arrogance were the real causes of the war. . . .

Mexico has counted on the assistance, ineffectual, unfortunately, but generous and illustrious of a Clay, an Adams, a Webster, a Gallatin. . . . Their conduct deserves our thanks, and the authors of this work have a true pleasure in paying . . . sincere homage of their gratitude. . . .

From the acts referred to, it has been demonstrated to the very senses, that the real and effective cause of this war that afflicted us was the spirit of aggrandizement of the United States of the North, availing itself of its power to conquer us. Impartial history will some day illustrate for ever the conduct observed by this Republic against all laws, divine and human, in an age that is called one of light, and which is, notwithstanding, the same as the former—one of *force and violence*.

SOURCE: Ramon Alcaraz et al., eds., *The Other Side: Or Notes for the History of the War Between Mexico and the United States* (New York, 1850), 2–3, 30–32.

## 9 / Resistance

In 1846, on the eve of the Mexican War, Mexico's northern frontier had about eighty thousand inhabitants. This was only about ten percent of the Mexican population, which numbered around eight million. Three-quarters of the inhabitants of the northern frontier lived in New Mexico.

The eighty thousand Mexicans who lived in the Southwest did not respond to the Mexican War with a single voice. A few welcomed the United States. Many others, recognizing the futility of resistance, responded to the American conquest with ambivalence. A number openly resisted the Anglo military advance. For example, in 1847 disaffected Mexicans and Pueblo Indians in Taos, New Mexico, staged an unsuccessful revolt, in which they killed the governor imposed by the United States. One observer described the dominant view: "The native sons have hope that the Americans will tire of a long and stubborn war and that in some time they will be left to live in their land in peace and tranquility." Perhaps the strongest resistance to

PART IV

## The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and Its Aftermath

In United States history textbooks, the chief significance of the Mexican-American war was territorial and political. For \$15 million, the nation added 500,000 square miles of western lands from Kansas to the Pacific, encompassing what is now California, Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of Utah and Colorado. The war also re-ignited disputes over slavery in the western territory.

But for the region's Mexicans, the war's consequences were monumentally disastrous. When the treaty ending the war was signed, there were perhaps eighty thousand Mexican residents in the former Mexican territories that became the southwestern United States. In the years that followed the war they suffered a massive loss of land and political influence.

In early 1848, following the United States capture and occupation of Mexico City, negotiations drew up a preliminary draft of the treaty. After revision by the Senate, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, signed in the Villa de Guadalupe across from the shrine dedicated to Mexico's patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe, was ratified by both governments later that year. In return for the northern third of Mexico, the United States agreed to pay \$15 million and to assume up to \$3.25 million in claims by its citizens against the Mexican government. The

treaty guaranteed Mexicans newly absorbed into the United States and to their descendants certain political rights, including land rights.

In 1853, the United States purchased a thirty thousand square mile strip of land in southern Arizona and New Mexico for \$10 million. Acquired for a southern transcontinental railroad route, the Gadsden Purchase had profound consequences for the Mexicans who resided in the region. Two thousand Mexicans from the conquered lands who had moved to northern Mexico suddenly found themselves annexed by the United States.

## 1 / The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo gave Mexicans the right to remain in United States territory or to move to Mexico. About three thousand chose to move, but the overwhelming majority decided to stay. These people could choose to retain Mexican citizenship or become citizens of the United States. The treaty explicitly guaranteed Mexican Americans “the right to their property, language, and culture.”

The United States Senate revised Article IX, which guaranteed Mexicans civil and political rights (substituting wording from the treaty acquiring Louisiana territory from France), and deleted Article X, which protected Mexican land grants. Officials feared that Article X would revive old Mexican and Spanish land grants and would have thrown into question land grants made by the Texas government following its declaration of independence in 1836. Many Mexicans did not have perfect title to their lands. Frequent changes in political administrations and the slowness of the Mexican bureaucracy made it difficult for landholders to obtain clear title. Article X would have allowed them to complete the process under administration by the United States. The article specifically recognized the rights of Mexican land-grant claimants in Texas, most of whom had been dispossessed of their lands by Anglo-Texans following Texas independence. The article would have allowed them to resurrect their claims and fulfill the conditions of Mexican law

## 2 / Articles IX and X

The Mexican government signed the treaty under duress. Antiguovernment rebellions had broken out, and the national government desperately needed funds to pay the army. British money brokers pressured Mexican officials to end the war and begin repaying the country's debts.

Despite assurances made during the treaty negotiations, by the end of the century, most Mexicans had lost their land. During the 1960s, a number of groups of Mexican Americans struggled to ensure compliance with the provisions of the treaty. They were especially eager to regain the land that had been granted to their ancestors by Spain and Mexico. In their fight to regain land for the rural poor in northwestern New Mexico, the New Mexican land rights crusader Reyes López Tijerina and his Alianza movement invoked the Treaty of Guadalupe. In 1972, the Brown Berets, a youth organization, invoked the treaty in its symbolic takeover of Catalina Island, off the southern California coast.

Article IX was intended to protect the civil and property rights of Mexicans who remained in the Southwest. The following paragraph appeared in the original treaty.

### Article IX

The Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of citizens of the Mexican Republic . . . shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States as soon as possible. . . . In the meantime, they shall be maintained and protected in the enjoyment of their liberty, their property, and the civil rights now vested in them according to the Mexican laws. With respect to political rights, their condition shall be on an equality with that of the inhabitants of the other territories of the United States.

The U.S. Senate replaced this clause with a more ambiguous statement, modelled after the treaty that had brought the Louisiana territory into the Union.

[Mexicans not choosing to remain citizens of Mexico] shall be incorporated into the Union of the United States and be admitted, at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the

United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of the Constitution; and in the meantime shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction.

SOURCE: Charles I. Bevans, ed., *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, Vol. 9 (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1937), 791-806.

The Senate of the United States deleted Article X from the final treaty.

### Article X

All grants of land made by the Mexican government or by the competent authorities, in territories previously appertaining to Mexico . . . shall be respected as valid, to the same extent if said territories had remained within the limits of Mexico. But the grantees of lands in Texas . . . [who] may have been prevented from fulfilling all the conditions of their grants, shall be under the obligation to fulfill the said conditions within the periods limited in the same respectively; such periods to be now counted from the date of the exchange of ratifications.

SOURCE: David Hunter Miller, *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, Vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937).

## 3 / Mexico Debates the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

In the following passage, Manuel Crescencio Rejon, a Mexican from Yucatán who believed that Mexico should wage a guerrilla war against the United States, denounces the treaty.

### Manuel Crescencio Rejon

We will never be able to compete in our own markets with the North American imports. . . . The treaty is our sentence of death. . . .

The North Americans hate us, their orators deprecate us even in speeches in which they recognize the justice of our cause, and they consider us unable to form a single nation or society with them.

SOURCE: "Observations on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo," reprinted in *Pensamiento Politico* (Washington, D.C.: UNAM, 1968), 119-23.

Bernardo Couto, one of the original commissioners who negotiated the agreement, defends the treaty.

### **Bernardo Couto**

The treaty not only prevents any increase of our losses by a continuation of the war, but recovers the greater part of that which was subjected to the arms of the conquerors; it may be more properly called a treaty of recovery rather than one of alienation. . . .

It can hardly be said that we lose any power, sine that which we cede is almost all uninhabited and uncultivated. . . . We lose in our rich hopes for the future, but if we know how to cultivate and defend the territory that the treaty preserves or has rescued for us, we shall find it sufficient to console us for our past misfortunes.

SOURCE: *Siglo XIX*, June 7, 1848, 3: 4.

## **4 / A Backhanded Compromise: The Protocol of Querétaro**

Mexico protested the elimination of Article X and the revision of other articles, and officials of the United States responded by signing the Protocol of Querétaro, which stated that the changes made by the Senate did not annul the civil, political, and religious guarantees provided in the original treaty. The United States government later disavowed the protocol on the grounds that its representatives had not been empowered to make the agreement.

### **The Protocol of Querétaro**

The American Government by suppressing the IXth article of the Treaty and substituting the III article of the Treaty of Louisiana did not intend to diminish in any way what was agreed upon. . . . In consequence, all the privileges and guarantees, civil, political and religious, which would have been possessed by the inhabitants of the ceded territories, if the IXth article of the Treaty had been retained, will be enjoyed by them without any difference under the article which has been substituted.

The American Government, by suppressing the Xth article of the Treaty of Guadalupe did not in any way intend to annul the grants of lands made by Mexico in the ceded territories. These grants, notwithstanding the suppression of the article of the Treaty, preserve the legal value which they may possess, and the grantees may cause their legitimate titles to be acknowledged before the American tribunals.

SOURCE: David Hunter Miller, *Treaties and Other International Acts of the United States of America*, Vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937).